

Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy

Section One: Operating Context

Description of School

Meánscoil Iognáid Rís, Drimnagh Castle is a voluntary secondary school which is grant aided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). It is a single sex (boys) school under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The Board of Management includes trustees, parents, and teachers; the school also has an active parents 'and students 'council.

Mission Statement

Meánscoil Iognáid Rís, Drimnagh Castle operates within the context of the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The legacy of Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers, challenges our school to be inclusive and to be especially mindful of the disadvantaged. It challenges our school to focus on the importance of a value-based, Christian education in the Catholic tradition. The school embraces the vision of promoting in its pupils full personal and social development in a caring Christian community of learning and teaching. It subscribes to a holistic vision of education which is expressed in the following five key principles:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality, and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership

Legal Context

The ethos of Edmund Rice is fundamental to all the endeavours of the school. The school recognises its obligations under relevant national legislation and international agreements. In particular, we note the following:

- U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Article 42 of Bunreacht na h-Eireann
- Education Act 1998
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- Equal Status Act 2000
- Education for Person with Disabilities (2003)

The policy is drafted within the context of circular letters issued by the DES

Aims and Objectives

The general aim of the SEN is to provide a foundation and framework for the SEN Department in the school. The policy aims to determine guidelines that will optimise the teaching and learning process for pupils with special needs so that they are able to maximise their achievements in personal, social, and academic spheres. Special needs refers to a broad spectrum of areas, including physical, social, emotional, general, and specific learning difficulties. In collaboration with parents, the school endeavours to address these areas of need using the supports available through various agencies. The following are the essential elements of our approach towards achieving these aims:

- The school seeks the early identification of pupils with SEN. This is achieved by meeting the parents of all pupils applying to enter the school and collecting all relevant information from previous schools. An appropriate screening test is administered to all incoming first year pupils and further diagnostic tests are administered to pupils highlighted by the screening test.
- The school strives to develop the self-esteem and learning potential of each pupil. All pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities in an inclusive atmosphere.
- The school sets appropriate standards for pupils and endeavours to provide the necessary supports to enable pupils to fulfil their true potential.
- The school recognises and celebrates the achievements of pupils with SEN.
- Parents are actively encouraged to participate in the educational development of their child and the school promotes a close partnership between parents and teachers.
- The school encourages the development of staff expertise in the area of SEN.
- As a true example of a Christian community, the school recognises and values both gifted children and children with learning difficulties.

Section Two: Procedures and Processes

Assessment

All incoming first year pupils are required to participate in a standardised screening test; subsequent diagnostic testing may take place in literacy and numeracy as necessary. The information gained from these tests facilitates the selection of pupils requiring learning support and aids in the development of specialised programmes and strategies. Continuous monitoring and assessment takes place while the pupils continue to receive support. Pupils enrolling at a later stage participate in similar assessment procedures and the school provides support if necessary.

Placing of Pupils

All first year classes are initially organised on a mixed-ability basis and every effort is made to disperse and mix pupils of all levels and ability. After the first term of first year, classes may be re-organised in some subjects. We invite all pupils including

those with special needs in our feeder schools to visit the school before they begin first year. This helps to smooth the transition from primary school to secondary school for prospective pupils with special needs.

Model of Organisation and Selection of Pupils for SEN

The selection of pupils for SEN support is based on a variety of criteria. Consideration is given to a pupil's performance in a number of assessment tasks e.g. Micra T, Sigma T, Cat 4, and NRIT. If a pupil's stem score, standard score or percentile rank in the objective tests indicate that a pupil may require extra support in school, further diagnostic testing takes place in the areas of literacy and/or numeracy. Where a pupil's standard score, percentile rank or stem score indicate an area of need, then support will be offered.

Pupils who have been diagnosed by appropriate personnel outside the school as having educational difficulties will also be offered support. In addition to diagnostic testing in the school the recommendations of educational psychologists will generally be taken into consideration when planning interventions.

In addition to standardised objective testing, the school offers common tests with common marking schemes in all subjects at Christmas and summer. A pupil's performance in these end of term exams is also taken into consideration when selecting pupils for extra support.

Pupils who have been assessed by qualified (appropriate) personnel as having social or emotional difficulties may receive additional support in the form of Behaviour Programmes such as:

- Re-tracking Programme
- Provision of "Time Out"
- Access to school counsellor
- Rainbows
- Friends programme

The SEN team provides intervention programmes for their pupils with SEN, in order to facilitate their full integration within the mainstream system. The duration of their provision will be determined by the student's progress.

Recording of Information

The SEN team maintains individual files for every pupil receiving support. The amount of detail in files mirrors the pyramid of support as outlined in the NEPS continuum of support. An individual pupil file is opened in first year for all SEN pupils. The file is added to as the pupil progresses through the school. Most of the additions to the file are descriptions of interventions designed for the individual pupil.

Pupils who have no diagnosed disability or who were not initially considered to be in need of support may fall behind their peers as they progress through the school. Such pupils may receive support periodically. Any support given to these pupils will be recorded in the SEN section of the pupils VShare file.

Increasingly the VSware system in the school is being used to record interventions and disseminate information regarding pupils to teachers. The VSware system is regarded as being secure and appropriate

All paper files and assessments are stored securely on the school premises and access to these files is available through the SEN coordinator. Only relevant school personnel and parents can gain access to the files. External agencies or institutions cannot access these files without parental permission. The school stores files for four years subsequent to the pupil leaving the school. The SEN team communicate with class tutors regarding individual pupils with special needs. Class tutors disseminate any necessary information regarding pupils with special needs to relevant subject teachers; in addition information is available on the VSware.

Access to the School

The school's mission statement challenges the school to be inclusive and a true resource for the local community. The school strives to support the possible inclusion of all students with special educational needs. In this regard, the school relies on both its own resources and the support of the government to ensure that it can provide for the needs of all students in an appropriate manner.

Developing Inclusive Curricula

The school strives to ensure the same quality of educational experience for all pupils, irrespective of ability or need. The school also aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Consequently, all pupils are given an equal opportunity to choose various subjects, which are taught at higher, ordinary, and foundation levels. Parents, pupils, and teachers agree, in a collaborative manner, on the appropriate level for individual pupils. Extra-curricular activities are considered a very effective way of developing an atmosphere of inclusion in the school and all SEN pupils are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities.

The Role of Key Staff

The school acknowledges and values a whole school approach to SEN; however, the main responsibilities of learning support and resource pupils are carried out by the SEN team. The school's SEN team involves Learning Support and Resource teachers, teachers of English as a Foreign Language, Special Needs' Assistants, Guidance Counsellors and The School Completion team. The SEN team report to the Principal and Deputy Principal regularly throughout the school year. The team are part of a wider Care team in the school; the Care team meets regularly to discuss pupils' needs in the school. These meetings allow the team to identify any issues of concern and discuss possible interventions for pupils who are experiencing difficulties. Members of the Care Team may refer a pupil to the school psychologist or external agencies. Learning Support Teachers, Resource Teachers and Special Needs' Assistants also meet regularly with the school's assigned NEPS psychologist. The psychologist is available to assess pupils suggested by the SEN team.

The Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) personnel in the school operate within the context of circular 0030/2014.

The SNA's role is to look after the care needs of students who have been granted SNA access by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). However the school Principal or Deputy Principal may also identify additional pupils who require assistance from a SNA.

The care duties of the SNA include: supporting students to remain on task in the classroom; ensuring safety in practical subjects; aiding organisation; arranging special classroom furniture;; promoting appropriate interaction with peers and staff and encouraging pupils to become more independent.

However, examples of the primary care needs which would be considered significant and which might require SNA support are:

Assistance with feeding: where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time

Administration of medicine: where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time

Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: (including catheterisation) where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so

Assistance with mobility and orientation: on an ongoing basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a child to access school transport), or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school. (Every effort is made by the school to provide opportunities for independence e.g. the removal of hazards.)

Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision

Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions: such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health.

Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a

child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis.

Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.

Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc.

The tasks noted above are the primary care support tasks for which access to SNA support will normally be provided.

The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs often perform.

Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another. To assist with cleaning of materials.

Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans.

Assist teachers and/or Principal in maintaining a journal or care monitoring system for pupils including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs.

Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with class teachers and other teachers such as the resource teacher and school principal, attending meetings with parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class teacher/principal

Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel including class teachers or support teachers.

Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

1. The SNA always works under the direction of the Principal or Deputy Principal.
2. The SNA should be familiar with all school policies and the Code of Behaviour.
3. Confidentiality and discretion is expected in all matters when dealing with SEN pupils.

4. Pupils are granted access to SNAs by the NCSE.
5. SNAs should document and record any incidents where the care needs of the pupils are evident.
6. SNAs are encouraged to build a positive relationship, based on trust, with the parents of children with SEN.
7. Each member of the SNA team will be assigned to a limited number of pupils with whom they develop a relationship of trust. In the event of SNA absence, the Principal may request that the SNAs present undertake some of the duties of their absent colleagues with prioritised students.
8. SNAs may be assigned to other duties deemed appropriate when pupils with SEN are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.

The Role of Parents

The school recognises parents as the primary educators of children and wishes to develop a supportive partnership with all parents and specifically with parents of children receiving support. Parents of all children applying to enter the school are interviewed and briefed regarding the school. After screening and diagnostic assessments, the parents of children receiving support are invited to the school to meet the teachers involved. These meetings usually take place in the first or second term of the school year and the parents are given the opportunity to discuss assessments and examine plans.

Involvement of Pupils

The needs and interests of individual pupils are carefully considered before planning a scheme of support. The SEN team try to establish each individual pupil's strengths, weaknesses, and needs by focusing on formal and informal assessments and by considering a pupil's hobbies and interests. This helps to maintain the pupil's interest and participation as they proceed through a variety of educational activities designed to stimulate and engage them in effective educational experiences. In addition, the school also strives to provide for pupils who may require assistance or accommodations during house exams. These provisions include laptops, extra time, scribes, readers, and tapes/recorders.

The School Completion Programme

The School is part of the School Completion Programme that aims to maximise pupil retention within the educational system. As part of this programme, the school provides extra learning supports for a target group of pupils who may be at risk of not

completing secondary school. These supports include a homework club, the Rainbows Programme, Re-tracking programme, Breakfast club and home visits.

Training Needs of Staff

The school recognises the need for specialised expertise in many areas of school activity. This is especially important for the SEN Department. Staff who seek further training and development are facilitated by both the school's own resources and the resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills.

Pupils from Minority Cultures

The school recognises the changing social context in which it operates and to be truly inclusive the school strives to reflect the diverse community it serves. The school welcomes children of all cultures and acknowledges the positive influence diversity can have on the school community. Using the resources available, the school aims to assist in the successful integration of students from other cultures while also recognising and respecting their cultural differences. As part of this process, children requiring extra support in English language receive specialised tuition, the extent of which is dependent on the resources made available by the Department of Education and Skills.

Relationship with External Agencies and Services

The school acknowledges the contribution made to the school by external agencies and services whose aims are consistent with those of the school in relation to supporting pupils with special needs. In particular, the school maintains close association with the following:

- The National Council for Special Education
- The National Educational Psychological Services
- The Visiting Teachers Services
- The National Educational Welfare Board
- The School Completion Programme
- The State Examination Commission
- The Assistive Technology Section of DES

Review and Evaluation of Policy

It is intended that this policy will be reviewed annually by The Learning Support Team.

Ratified on the 18th June 2018

